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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1666
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1670
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2424
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2498
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0635
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000524

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SUBJECT: EXTREMIST MEDIA GETS SOPHISTICATED

REF: JAKARTA 99

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Jemaah Islamiyah and other radical Islamists have had their ability to carry-out terrorist operations severely weakened in the last few years. Elements of these groups, however, still exist and they are increasingly focusing their energies on spreading radical thinking through media outlets. High quality books, magazines and DVDs are being produced by a network of radicals who maintain close personal/professional links. This method of spreading "Jihad" is relatively subtle compared to the violence employed in the past and its political efficacy is not yet clear. END SUMMARY.

WAGING JIHAD VIA THE MEDIA

12. (C) Over the past several years, the Indonesian authorities--acting with the quiet assistance of the USG and other countries--have successfully marginalized Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorists and militants who have used violence to spread their message (see reftel). Facing pressure from the authorities and widespread public revulsion toward their tactics, JI and other radical groups have had to rethink their tactics, a process which apparently has encouraged what appears to be a growing use of alternative means of spreading their Jihadist views. While JI has been weakened in a terrorist operational sense, elements of JI and its supporters remain active, and are increasingly spreading their radical message through high quality books, magazines and DVDs.

13. (C) Based on what Mission understands, the publications are produced through a network of supporters and associates of JI who create, print, distribute, market and sell advertising for their materials throughout Indonesia and other Islamic countries. The doyen of the JI publishing business is Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, co-founder of a radical pesantren (religious school) in Solo, Central Java, in the

1980s. The school remains a nexus for dissemination of radical JI and JI-related publications. Through his pesantren and its ties to the Islamic publishing industry, Ba'asyir--who was recently released from prison--is using the media to spread radical Islamic thought around the country.

14. (C) This business is not focused on profit. According to John Virgoe, Southeast Asia Project Director for the International Crisis Group (ICG)--a non-profit NGO specializing in security/conflict resolution--the Jihadi publications are not making money for JI. Profits for these publishers derive instead from their mainstream books focusing on "women in Islam" and family-oriented publications. Those profits subsidize the printing of the radical media. Virgoe told poloff that while there was no firm evidence of funding from outside Indonesia, the contents were largely translations from foreign, radical sources. (Note: ICG recently published an analysis of JI's publishing efforts. The report is accessible at: www.crisisgroup.org.)

AN INCREASINGLY SLICK FORMAT

15. (C) Extremist media are not exactly hiding from sight. At a recent Islamic media fair in Jakarta, representatives from 10 to 12 companies, including Ar-Rahmah Publishing, were selling Jihadi literature and DVDs. Ar-Rahmah in particular offered magazines, books and DVDs of unprecedented high quality. Some of its DVDs used an English speaker to present Jihadi views, with subtitles in Arabic and Indonesian.

16. (C) The company also displayed the first issue of a slick, glossy new magazine entitled "JihadMagz." The issue featured articles on "three Umars" in jihad combat, an article on "jihad" in Afghanistan, an interview with an Al-Qaida militant in Iraq, a portrait of "An American Mujahid" and an analysis of jihad weapons featuring the AK-47 as the most popular. Ba'asyir appeared at the company's

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booth to officially release the magazine to the Indonesian public.

17. (C) Another attraction at the fair was the "Voice of Islam" radio network. The network representatives promoted their radio programming which included Islamic songs and talk shows advocating strict Islamic views. Currently, the network is played on 153 radio stations throughout Indonesia. The network's booth was also selling Jihadi DVDs and books with DVDs boasting titles like "Iraq Under Attack" and children's cartoons highlighting strict Islamic teachings. They also played DVDs showing how to make Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). (Note: Extremist media were only a very small component of the large fair, which was opened by President Yudhoyono. The vast majority of the items on sale were religious in nature and not jihadi-linked.)

SOMETHING TO MONITOR

18. (C) Islamic extremist periodicals, etc., have been around for some time, but have not usually been particularly sophisticated in Indonesia. Mission is struck, however, by the sophistication of the Ar-Rahman products, the quality of the writing and the format and the low-key, though unmistakable approach to the United States and other countries as targets. The magazine in particular is designed to appeal to better-off Indonesians, and the 45,000-rupiah price (appr.USD 5.00), which represents a day's wages for the average worker, is one few Indonesians can afford. Mission is probing contacts to learn more about the financial sources of the company, which is based in Tangerang, a suburb of Jakarta.

19. (C) Compared with the violence employed in the past, this method of spreading "Jihad" is relatively subtle. It is not clear how effective it is. Obviously, its major objectives are recruitment to the cause and fundraising, though the

publications are not explicit on that score. Some of the proceeds may be being ploughed back into JI terrorist cells, though that is not clear. There are no indications that extremist thinking is catching on with the Indonesian public and such thinking does not really figure in mainstream media.

That said, JI-related media--which is now emerging from its embryonic state--is clearly something that needs continued monitoring.

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